

6 March 1981  
MLD-1008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

FROM : Chief, London Bureau

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- London Bureau -- February 1981

## I. GENERAL

A. Construction on the ROSET project got underway on 23 February. Progress has been hampered by several days of steady rain.

B. A heavy surge of Soviet press material in February caused PMU to break all production records. Its daily average for the month was 38,480 words, the previous high being 32,260 in July 1980. PMU flagged 32% of its February file to the BBC.

C. February was also the heaviest traffic month ever, with a daily average of 100,840 words; the daily file exceeded 100,000 words on 17 days, with the highest coming on 25 February when it totaled 150,180, second highest in bureau history.

D. The dollar rose to \$2.18 against the pound on 2 March, its highest level in 11 months.

## II. OPERATIONS

### A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. The major coverage event of the month was the 26th CPSU Congress, which began on 23 February and lasted 8 days. Having worked out coverage arrangements and procedures with Headquarters and the BBC ahead of time, the bureau was well prepared to handle the large volume of material expeditiously and no backlogs developed. Several of the more important addresses, including Brezhnev's long keynote speech, were filed over the dedicated circuit to facilitate Wire Service distribution to keenly interested consumers. Coordination with other bureaus and Headquarters went smoothly. In fact for the bureau the Congress, which produced no surprises except possibly Brezhnev's pitch for a summit, was something of an anticlimax after all the advance thought and preparation that had gone into its coverage.

(expect...)

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2. The big surprise during the Congress, which came amid the press of moving the first day's material, took place in Madrid, where an armed group took over the Cortes as it met to elect a new premier. First word came from Okinawa's AFP, and the BBC immediately placed an open watch on Spanish media. Numerous short reports and a series of radio behavior FYI's were filed. Overnight listening produced the speech by King Juan Carlos, which dashed the hopes of the rightwing putschists. The episode was over by midday Tuesday, and Madrid Domestic programming and BBC monitoring returned to normal soon afterward.
3. The Polish situation continued to simmer, necessitating extra monitorial efforts on several occasions. Coverage of Warsaw radio was maintained throughout the night on 9 February, to report on the PZPR Central Committee session at which the premiership changed hands; additional monitors were brought in to handle Warsaw's extensive reportage, including 9 hours of live relays, of the 2-day meeting of the Sejm, which heard a speech by the new premier and the announcement of additional personnel changes. Late in the month, when the situation appeared to have stabilized, BBC reduced its Polish team's hours to 0800-0130 GMT daily but kept up its "on call" procedures to cover any increase in tension.
4. What with the war and the internal power struggle, post-hostage Iran remained a significant focus of operational attention. BBC's reduced--though still relatively intensive--coverage of Tehran media was hampered during the month by problems in printing PARS transmissions. It is hoped that these will soon be resolved since the agency itself has indicated that it is having transmission difficulties. In the meantime, ad hoc assistance is being provided by Gulf Bureau, which recently assumed primary responsibility for backstopping PARS casts.

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5. PMU added three regional Polish newspapers to regular coverage: Gdansk DZIENNIK BALTYCKI, Katowice DZIENNIK ZACHODNI and Krakow ECHO KRAKOWA. So far it has filed nine items from these papers. PMU has also taken out a subscription to the Polish weekly RABOTNIK, a Solidarity organ, and to AFGHAN VOICE, a publication of the Afghan Rebel News Agency based in London. So far no copies of either of these publication have been received.
6. For most of the month, the Jordan and Gulf Bureaus and NEAAD took over some of PMU's Arabic press coverage during a monitor's sick leave.

B. Cologne Unit

1. The Unit was alerted by the Bonn Embassy on 18 February to an article of great potential interest slated to appear in the next day's issue of STERN. It dealt with supposed revelations of sites in the FRG where new medium-range nuclear missiles are schedule to be based in 1983 and where nuclear warheads are allegedly now stored. The item was texted and filed priority.
2. The dollar continued to strengthen against the mark, setting a 4-year high during the month.
3. The Unit processed nine items at BBC request.

C. Communications

1. There was a planned total power downtime on 16 February at 0115 for 15 minutes while the BBC carried out repairs to the emergency generator switching gear. Headquarters had been alerted in advance, and power was restored after repairs without incident.

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2. The terminal equipment for the higher speed Autodin/DW hookup has been bench tested and is in the process of being installed. Nothing further can be done until the new higher [ ] circuit is in operation (about 20 April). Meanwhile, it is hoped to get the new Autodin Mode I circuit connected. This will then enable us to hook up the new arrangement at the higher speed.

### III. VISITS

- A. [ ] Headquarters EDSS, visited the bureau 24-28 February to instruct BBC engineers in the installation and operation of additional equipment for the Islamabad circuit. Once the same type equipment has been installed on the Islamabad end, we will have a ringing capability here and, it is hoped, the audio quality of the line will improve.
- B. PMU's Turkmen contractor, [ ] Director of the Central Asian Research Center in London, visited the bureau on 2 February. He met with the Bureau Chief and Deputy Chief and Chief, PMU, to discuss the function and operation of the Center. Later he met with BBC Senior Assistant II Mrs [ ] to discuss BBC requirements in the Central Asian languages.



#### Attachment

cc: Chief, Austrian Bureau  
Chief, Cologne Unit